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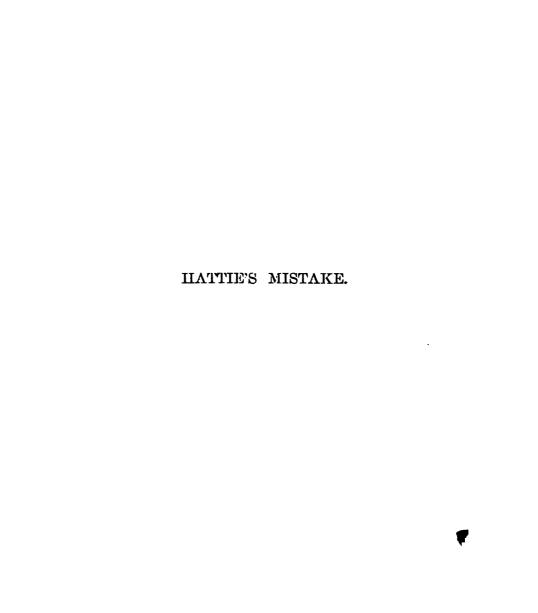
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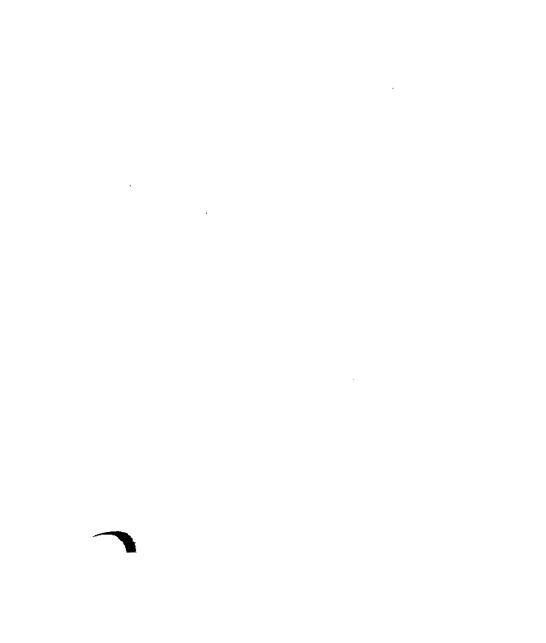
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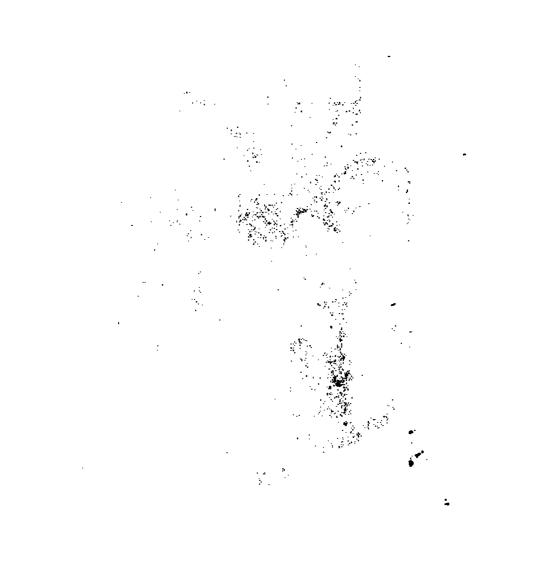












## HATTIE'S MISTAKE;

OR,

## MOTHERS and MOTHERS.

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## London :

WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,
12, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1882.

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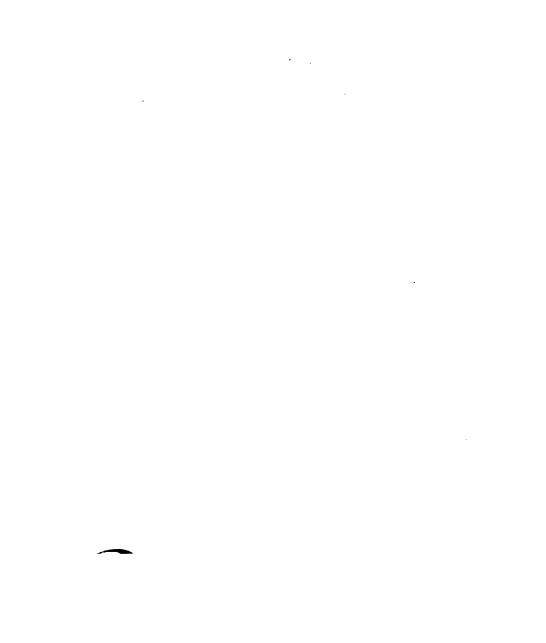
CHIMAL DAY

#### TO MY FATHER,

THE

## REV. SAMUEL GARRATT,

HON. CANON OF NORWICH.



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MOTHERS and MOTHERS

## HATTIE'S MISTAKE;

OB,

#### MOTHERS and MOTHERS.

#### CHAPTER I.

### "IN A MUDDLE."

omethow or other things would not go straight with Meg Morrison that bright, sunshiny day in August. Everything seemed to go just as she didn't mean it to. Baby cried at the very times she was most wanted to be quiet; the meat the butcher had brought was tough, and she knew Jim would grumble; the milk for the pudding boiled

over, and, besides the waste, gave her a great deal of extra work in making the stove bright and clean again; and, to crown all, it was washing day; and everybody knows what that means!

Poor Meg hurried about from one thing to the other, as it was getting late and Jim would soon be home; but her heart was heavy, and so her hands made little progress.

Instead of the merry song that sometimes accompanied her work, she was busy counting over her grievances.

"It's a hard life," she said to herself. "It's a hard life: I'm sure if I'd have known it, I'd never have gone and got married. Why, when I was at home, I was as merry and bright as any girl in the village, and I guess Jim liked me for that; but now I'm just about as cross and worried as a woman can be at times." And she stopped in the midst of her "tidying" to brush away a tear. "Jim

don't look at me as if he cared how I look now, not as he used to; and he used to make a good bit of my looks. Yes: it's a hard life,—just work, work, work, but not much thanks."

"Good morning, Mrs. Morrison; you look a bit down to-day: nothing wrong, I hope?" And a woman a good deal older than Meg came in unceremoniously through the open door, and seated herself on the nearest chair.

"Down! I should just think I might be. I'm that tired I don't know what to do, and it's getting on, and my husband will soon come home, and —— Oh, dear! there's baby crying again!" And poor Meg caught up the baby and rocked it violently up and down in her arms.

"Yes, poor thing: it's right hard for you, it is; but we're all alike. Now, if you was to go and take a peep into my house, you'd see I was in a pretty muddle, just like you; but it

don't do to go and worry yourself about it. Take things easy, Mrs. Morrison: that's what I says and does. Take things easy and comfortable, and never mind what the men says."

Now it did occur to Meg that it was rather strange that if Mrs. Green was in such a muddle as she said, that she should be out of her house instead of in it, so she said, rather sharply,—

"Well, Mrs. Green, perhaps you'll go and see after your business, and leave me to mine; for things won't be over easy for me when my husband comes home, if he don't find his dinner ready."

"Oh, certainly, I'll go if I'm not wanted; but I came just to ask you if you'd like me to get you anything in town! I saw a bonnet last time I was there as would suit you wonderful, Mrs. Morrison."

Now Meg, it must be confessed, was very

fond of finery, and Mrs. Green knew this, and felt sure of her attention at once. They were soon busy discussing shapes, ribbons, etc., and the time passed on so quickly that one o'clock struck before they had any idea it was so late. And almost at the same instant Jim Morrison came in from his work. He looked round, not over-pleased, and with a careless nod to Mrs. Green threw off his hat, and passed on into the inner room.

Meg put the baby in the cradle, and Mrs. Green got up, and left the house, after a few last words, with an encouraging smile at Meg, and whisper, "Never you mind if he does scold: just take it easy."

But Meg knew very well that he wouldn't scold, for Jim never did; but she knew from his face that he was vexed, as well he might be; and she didn't like the thought of meeting him. She felt thoroughly ashamed of the untidy room and comfortless dinner, but went

just the wrong way to work; and instead of telling her husband honestly how sorry she was when he came in, she began by abusing Mrs. Green and laying the fault on her for coming in and taking up her time. Now Jim was tired and hungry after his morning's work, and felt more than ready to do justice to his dinner, so all he said was, "Now then, Meg, let's have dinner; I'm that hungry I don't care what it is, so long as it's something."

Meg began to lay the table somewhat silently, for too well she knew the dinner was nearly all spoiled, and most untempting; and Jim, who was watching her, could not help thinking to himself, "How different she moves about and looks to the Meg I married two year ago!" As he thought, he sighed unconsciously, and his wife turned round, saying, impatiently, "Oh, it's all very well for you to sigh! You can sit still and have your

dinner got ready for you; while I, who am most ready to drop, have to stir about all day long, a toiling and wearing myself out. I say it's a shame, that I do." And Meg put the dishes on the table with an emphatic jerk. Jim looked up, "Why, Meg, my girl, what's come over you? Seems to me Mrs. Green's been and gone and left some of herself here in exchange for you, and I'd just as lief do without her." And he finished with a laugh as he drew his chair to the table. The laugh soon vanished, though, with the first mouthful of his dinner; for the meat was tough and badly cooked, the potatoes burnt, and the meal altogether was not one to set before a hungry man.

"Well, Meg, if this is all you've got for me, I guess I'll go and take a look in at Archer's. I'll be bound he's something nice and tasty, and a fellow's always welcome in there, so I'll be back again in the evening time." And taking up his hat again, he went out, slamming the door after him.

Meg stood viewing the dinner disconsolately. She was angry with it, angry with her husband, angry with Mrs. Green, angry with the butcher, angry with the baby, and, in short, angry with everything and everybody at that moment, excepting the very person she most needed to be,—herself.

"No," she said, "it's no good: they're all an ungrateful lot. No matter what one does for them, it's no thanks we get. They make a lot of us before they marry us, and then, when they've got us, they expect us to work, work, work, from morning till night, with nothing to cheer us and lift us up a bit. Tisn't much pleasure we wives get, not we."

#### CHAPTER II.

#### "ANOTHER HOME."

WHE home to which Jim Morrison found his way was one of an altogether different description to his own that day. True, it was small, and also poor; but the size and the poverty did not prevent it looking bright and inviting: for, at the first glance round, you could see that Love and Order reigned supreme, and where these are, Happiness is sure to be found too.

On the table was laid the dinner, which was no better or richer than that on Jim's own table, but which was cooked and prepared in such a way as to make the very best of it, and to be very welcome to the tired, hungry

husband and sons as they dropped in, one after the other, from their work. The wife, and mother, bright and smiling, had a pleasant word of welcome to each, and richly won the words which made her face all the brighter as Harvey Archer came in, "Why, wife, I declare it does a fellow good just to take a look at you!"

Jim Morrison came in gloomy and sad, and the contrast to his own home was really painful to him; but the comfort reached him as well as the others, and when the dinner was over, to which he was made heartily welcome, he felt able to set to his work with renewed energy, and to forget for a time his home troubles.

He went back in the evening cheered up, and willing to forget all about the unpleasantness of the morning; but the first sight of his wife's face was enough to cast him down again. Now Meg, it must be remembered, had been busy pitying herself and nursing her grievances; therefore, when she saw her husband coming home with his cheerful face and step, she felt all the more aggrieved and injured. She scarcely looked up when he came in, and went on rocking the baby up and down silently, without taking any notice. Jim felt chilled, but determined to try and get over it.

"Now then, Meg, I've had a right down good dinner, and feel all the better for it; and I declare that cheery little wife of Archer's has done me a sight of good. Let's forget all about it, eh, Meg? and have a cup of tea together comfortable, baby and all: what do you say?"

Now Jim, with a man's difficulty and inability to understand we women's feelings, had, unwittingly, made a great mistake. Meg was sore and angry enough before, but

this mention of Mrs. Archer rubbed her up again the wrong way and made matters worse. So instead of the bright answer her husband had expected, all he got was, with a toss of her head, "You'd better go and get your tea there too, then, if you think so much of Mrs. Archer: it's not a bit of good my setting to work to do anything for you; that it isn't."

Jim looked round the room to see what signs there were of anything having been got ready, but seeing none, he gave a short whistle, and finding matters indoors not much more genial than when he left in the morning, he put his hands in his pockets, and sauntered out again.

His wife had not in the least degree expected or wished to be taken at her words, and would have been glad enough to recall them. She had felt miserable and uncomfortable all through the day, and if

it had not been for Jim's manner when he came home, had meant to begin afresh; but, woman-like, she could not put up with his easy way of passing over things; and his praise of her neighbour had altogether done away with her good intentions. She knew and liked Mrs. Archer, but to hear her husband praise her, and seem to be cheered by her, when his own wife made him feel gloomy, was more than she could stand. And she made a fresh trouble for herself now. by heaping all manner of abuses on Mrs. Archer's head, who, poor woman, if she had known it, would indeed have been dismayed. Ah, Meg, better, far better, to kneel down and cast your burden of care on One "who careth for you." But Meg knew Him not, and loved Him not. Day after day, and night after night passed, but they did not find her seeking her God, and telling Him of the little daily worries which were far too

great for her to bear alone. True, she had heard of Him from a very child, and had knelt by her mother each evening to repeat her simple prayer; had been seen every Sunday in her accustomed place in church, and was known as a well-behaved, religious girl. But religion with Meg was an outside garment, and was put away and folded up on week-days, and forgotten all about till the next Sunday came round.

And when she was married, and all a woman's cares and joys came upon her, she had nothing deeper and more lasting to help her in her new duties than a naturally good temper and a pretty face. She and Jim had trusted much to these; but they were learning now that even the best of tempers gets soured and ruffled with troubles borne all alone, and that the prettiest face soon loses its charm when there is no beauty of soul underneath.

#### CHAPTER III.

#### "SHINING."

church was well filled with worshippers, seeming or real. Prayer had been offered by old and young; praise had gone up from the shrill, clear voices of the children, mingled with the quavering tones of the old men and women; and now the clergyman stood forth, God's messenger, to declare the message sent by Him to his flock. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The words, and his own earnest explanation of them, as in all congregations, were received by this one in varied and different ways. Some there

were who may be said not to hear them at all, they were so engrossed with other matters. Some heard them listlessly and indifferently, and then let them drop altogether from their minds. Others heard them, thinking how exactly they applied to what their neighbours were not; and some, but, alas! a few, received them longingly, lovingly into their hearts, with the prayer that theirs might be the "path of the just."

Harriet Green, the eldest daughter of the woman whose acquaintance we have already made in Mrs. Morrison's cottage, was sitting in a quiet little corner of the church by herself. She listened attentively to every word of the sermon, but her face looked sad and desponding; and when, at the close, she rose up with the others who joined in the hymn, her lips were silent. She did not join her mother as the people slowly wended their ways home, but walked along quietly by

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"She was joined by Richard Archer, a lad a year or two younger than herself."—Page 25.

herself until she was joined by Richard Archer, a lad a year or two younger than herself.

"Well, Hattie, he did just speak beautiful to-night! Sunday seems to set one up, somehow." And the boy looked brightly into his companion's face.

"Beautiful, was it?" repeated Hattie, sadly. "Well, I don't know, Dick: it may do for you and some folks; but for me, it just seems a right down mockery. It's all very well to talk about shining, but in some place it's just impossible to shine, that it is!"

"Poor Hattie," said the boy, pityingly: "I know what you mean."

"It's mother," she went on, "mother that sets me wrong; and with her a going on as she does, I can't keep straight. Oh, Dick, you don't know a bit what it is to feel you can't love your own mother! When I see her all day long, always a grumbling at one,

and doing nothing herself, and her and the house always of a muddle like, I'd just like to sit down and cry, that I would. Just now and then she seems like as if she was at her best side, and is kind of pleasant, but it isn't often, any one knows."

"Poor Hattie," said Dick again, softly: "it is bad for you. Our mother, why, bless you, she's just best side all round; you can't catch her at her bad side, seems to me, nohow."

"But what can I do?" went on the girl, earnestly. "What can I do, Dick, when I go to church and hear what one should do and be like, as we did to-night, now; and then go back home, and find everything just contrary like and all the other way? No, Dick, I guess God means you to try and shine, for He's give you the chance; but for me, it isn't a mite of good."

They walked on together, silently, until they reached the corner of the village street, where

they stopped, and were going to separate, when Dick said, as if the thought had just struck him: "I say, Hattie, I tell you what, just you try to shine a bit yourself, and dazzle them up at that there home of yours, and see what that'll do—no telling."

"It'd take a goodish bit of shining to dazzle mother, I guess," said Hattie, shaking her head, gravely, and walking away in the opposite direction. But, nevertheless, as she walked, she couldn't help thinking it might be worth while to try as Dick had said. Her heart was very full that night, and the words she had heard in church clung to her, and kept on recurring to her mind over and over again. How far off she felt from that "path of the just!" It seemed to her so distant and unattainable that she could never reach it; and yet the girl's whole heart was filled with longing after it at that moment. She did not know that this very longing was a sign that

Christ had begun His work in her, and that her feet had already turned into that path, and though walking very feebly now, would one day be strengthened by the Light that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Harriet's thoughts received a sudden check as she entered her home, and heard her mother's loud tones and coarse laugh. There were one or two other women with her in the little room, listening, with occasional interjections of "Really now!" "You don't say so!" to Mrs. Green, who appeared to be the chief speaker. When Hattie came in they all looked round, but took no further notice, and she walked up to the open window and looked out dreamily into the street, leaning her elbow on the window sill. Her thoughts were busy, so she did not pay much attention to the conversation of the women, until she heard her mother say,—

"Oh, my: wasn't it just a sight to see Mrs. Morrison stalking in with that there bonnet on her head; and she too, that everyone knows hasn't more than enough to bless herself with! That bonnet cost five shillings if it cost a penny; and I say she ought to be ashamed of herself, a wasting of her husband's money in that fashion."

Hattie suddenly turned round.

"Why, mother!" she said, "you bought the bonnet your own self for Mrs. Morrison, and I'm pretty well sure you said you only give three and sixpence for it."

"Pretty well sure, indeed!" returned Mrs. Green, tartly: "you'd better be quite sure another time afore you give out your opinion—a chit like you. I should like to know what you know about it."

"No, you wouldn't," said Hattie, indignantly: "you'd just be ashamed if I was to say out all I knew. I call it real mean to go

and abuse Mrs. Morrison like that, and then when you're along of her, to talk so different. It's just as mean as can be, all over; and I'll let her know what you say of her behind her back."

"You will, will you?" said Mrs. Green, hotly; and, coming up to her daughter, she gave her a sharp box on the ear. "Take that for an impertinent hussy as you are; and just you take yourself out of the way with your long tongue, and your sharp ears."

"Yes, that I will," returned Hattie, bitterly: "it isn't likely I'll stop where I aint wanted." And going upstairs, the girl flung herself on her little bed, sobbing.

"What's the good," she said to herself, "of knowing what's good and right, when you can't do it? Shining, indeed! A pretty hand I've made at shining! Oh, mother!" she went on, clenching her hands, "if it wasn't for you, I believe I might get to heaven one

day; but you're driving me on and on down to hell!"

She lay sobbing on until the light faded slowly away, and darkness came creeping in coldly and silently. Supperless, cold, and tired she lay, with no pleasant good night ringing in her ears; no mother's kiss before she slept; no word of prayer to Him who made her. Had Hattie uttered aloud the thought that was predominant in her mind as she fell asleep, it would have been a wish that she had not been born into a world where her own mother felt for her no love, and in whose home she felt to have no place, and to wonder envyingly what it must be to have a mother who spoke and looked tenderly and lovingly at her children, and whose ways were sweet and true.

### CHAPTER IV.

# "WHAT A MOTHER MAY BE."

their beds that evening, a few doors off, by Mrs. Archer, fell asleep with brighter, softer feelings than did poor Harriet Green. With happy thoughts of the day past, and happy ones of the day to come; with the knowledge that a loving Father was keeping them from all evil, why should not their sleep be sweet and safe, and why should not their days break with all the joyful expectancy of youth?

Mrs. Archer was one of those women of whom it might be said, "Her children arise and call her blessed: her husband also, and he praiseth her." Not that she was free from the cares and trials of everyday life, which come upon all, more or less; and not that she did not fail over and over again in her daily walk; but simply because each day was committed to God, each care taken to Him to bear, each sin taken to Him for cleansing, each joy carried to Him in happy, childlike thankfulness. And, therefore, not trusting for one moment to her own strength, she stood strong in *His* strength.

That Sunday evening, after seeing the children safely in bed, she came down and joined her husband and sons, who were outside in their little strip of garden enjoying the evening air. Not one face but looked the brighter for her coming amongst them, and not one whose looks did not say plainly enough, "Now we're complete."

They were strong, well-to-do fellows, those four big sons of hers: the eldest one-and-

twenty; and two between him and Dick, the boy of fifteen, whom we have already met. After him came three younger ones, ending with a little girl, the only girl and the pet of all, who was just five. There was no want of work in a household like this for one woman alone, and abundant need of daily help from God. But a looker-on, who watched Mrs. Archer that night, and marked her quiet, happy face, so free from that fretful, harassed look that so often spoils the best of features, would have said hers must be an easy life, and would have guessed nothing of the countless worries and difficulties which seemed to be perpetually rising up. She was one who "hearkened unto God," and, therefore, was able to "dwell safely," and to be "quiet from fear of evil:" and this fact about her was apparent in her face, as well as her life. Before they went into the house, to their evening meal, Dick took possession of his

mother, and told her about the talk he had had that night with Hattie Green.

"She's well-nigh worrited out of her life," he said, "that she is. She hates her mother, and her mother hates her; and it seems to me she couldn't keep straight, try just as hard as she might. I say, Mrs. Green's an old hypocrite, that she is. She goes to church, and talks, and makes believe to be as good as the best of 'em; and then at home she's a downright wretch, leastways, she is to Hattie."

"Oh, Dick," said his mother, softly, "'judge not!' Don't you remember that in the Bible? Why, where should you and I be if some one was to take and judge us? I think we should be all wrong, Dick."

"But not like her," Dick said, indignantly.

"It isn't the same way with us: we don't know all about her, so we won't talk of her at all, for it's no good we get by it; but Hattie we must try to help, and I think we might sometimes. You bring her in, Dick, when she's a mind to come, and we'll try to hearten her up a bit."

"That I will, mother," said Dick, brightly, "whenever I can. But that precious mother of hers keeps her so close to work that it's mighty little chance of a holiday she gets."

"Well, we're all the better for work, if we can get light hearts to do it with. But now we must go in and get our supper."

And they all went in, one after the other, to their simple meal; and at the end of it, the father got down the big Bible and read a few words, and finished with a short prayer to their Father in heaven.

Poor Hattie would indeed have looked on envyingly at this household, and have wondered why hers should be so different. And she would have been surprised had she heard the loving words of prayer for her that came from the mother's heart that night under that roof, —a heart large enough to take in others besides her own children, and to ask for them those things which they so sorely needed. She did not think for one moment that there was a single person in the world who would bear her name before God; but had she known it, her heart would have felt lighter, she would have been less lonely, and believed far more in the love of God to all, although it seemed to her just then as if she was so far removed from both heavenly and earthly love.



### CHAPTER V.

# "SAD DAYS."

Morrison's little cottage. The winter was drawing on, and work was slack, and Jim often found it difficult to keep his wife and little one supplied with the necessaries of life. Added to this, the cloud which had arisen between the husband and wife had deepened, instead of changing into sunshine, and it was a far more frequent occurrence to hear angry words and disputings, and to see cross hard looks, than loving voices and happy faces. In their hearts they were each thoroughly sorry for this, and ashamed of it too, but neither would acknowledge it to the

other; and therefore the trouble went on and on, and they got further and further from each other. The little one, sent to be a blessing to them, was looked upon now as almost more of a care and anxiety than anything else; and although there had been a time when it would have been difficult to find a prouder father and mother than Jim and Meg, now the child would often pass through a day with very scanty notice from either. They were both in fault,—both husband and wife. Jim, who had thought no trouble too great to secure as his wife the prettiest, merriest girl in the village; when he once got her for his own, ceased to value what soon became a common thing. And although he loved her truly, he took no pains to show it, not from unkindness, but from sheer thoughtlessness, never thinking that Meg would look for it. But Meg did look for it, and looked in vain. A word of praise

goes a long way with us women, and cheers us, and gives us heart for our work, when otherwise we should fail and give under. Meg, the pet of the village, and the pride of her home, missed the many signs of love and appreciation she had so long been accustomed to, and her hands grew heavy because her heart was; her face became spiritless, for she felt that no one noticed or cared how she looked. She ceased to take much thought for Jim's comfort, and the result was unhappiness to herself and to all around her. She forgot how different man's nature is to woman's, or to try and find out where she was in the wrong herself.

Many a home might be spared much misery if the wife did but take pains to make herself as attractive to her husband after marriage as she did to her lover before it. But, with too many, the married life is a sad, sad opposite to the love that went before. In these dark

winter months, when times were hard, and it was a fight to supply the daily wants, how much easier would it have been if Jim and Meg had been able to hold up one another's hands! Poverty is hard to bear at all times; but poverty without love to take the edge off is indeed a bitter trial.

Their house became a favourite resort of Mrs. Green, who seemed almost to take a pleasure in leading the young wife astray, and in seeing the change for the worse in the once happy, well-kept little cottage. Meg did not like her, and felt an instinctive dread of her, but she had now got so careless and indifferent to good, that she took no pains to be rid of her; and although she knew her husband had a particular dislike to the woman, never could summon up courage to turn the cold shoulder on her. Meg had no heart to try and make friends with those who might really have done her some good; and

although she never sought out Mrs. Green, she listlessly allowed her in and out of the house just as she liked. It soon got to be an understood thing, amongst the neighbours, that Mrs. Green and "that young Mrs. Morrison were friends." "And a bad thing. too," said one and another, "and I'm rightsorry for it." For many had noticed the young wife when she first came amongst them, and had remarked on her pretty, bright face and manner, and they were now not slow to mark the change. Mrs. Archer, and one or two others, once or twice went to see her, and tried to be friendly with her: but they met with no success, as Mrs. Green had poisoned her mind about them.

One night Meg sat waiting long for Jim to come home from his work. Not waiting as a busy, happy housewife should after making all things ready for her husband,—with work in her hands and loving thoughts in her head

for him she waited for,—but idle, with empty hands and gloomy face, a dull fire and carelessly prepared supper, and with a heart filled with suggestions from Satan himself, who never lets the idle alone without an effort to tighten his chains about them. There she sat, with grumbling thoughts, with pity for none but herself, attributing unkind motives one after the other to her husband, and surmising reasons for his delay, for which she had no ground whatever; for, as a rule, Jim came straight to his home after work, and never even went to a neighbour's house for his evening meal.

Hour after hour she sat, until at last she got up and opened the door and looked out. It was a dark, stormy night, and the wind prevented her hearing any footstep. She stood there for a few minutes, and by and by she felt something stumble against her, and, drawing back, she saw her husband. They

went in together, and Meg saw at a glance that something was wrong. Neither uttered a word, but looked at each other in silence. At last Jim broke it by saying, slowly,—

"Now, see what you've driv' me to, Meg. I've been drunk! Yes: I! You may well look like that. I've been drunk: I, Jim Morrison, that'd never took a drop too much afore; but you've driv' me to it. How could a fellow keep to his home when he'd meet a face ev'ry night as gloomy as that there cloud out there, and the house all of a muddle? I tell you, I've kept away from the public this many an evening time, and kind o' compelled myself to come home; but 'twas always the same when I did come. A precious nice welcome I get at my home; and if it hadn't been for that Archer there. I'd have been there now, and you'd have seen me come home the drunken wretch I was awhile ago; but he caught sight of me in passing, and just

came in and dragged me out, and kept by me till I come to myself like. And now you see what you have done, eh?"

He finished with a forced laugh; but what a laugh! What a bitter mockery it sounded to Meg, as she stood and listened! looked at him with real agony in her face. Her eyes were opened, and at last she saw the terrible work she had been doing. Yes: she saw now, but too late, as she bitterly said to herself,—Was this the man she had promised to be a helpmeet to? was this the one she had so hopefully begun life with, who now told her, and, alas, too truly, she had driven to make himself less than a man? From her heart she repented, with her whole soul she longed for forgiveness; and going up to him, as he stood defiantly before her, she said.

"Jim, I know you're right. I've been a bad, bad wife to you; but if you'll give me a

chance, I will do better now; if you'll only just say you forgive me, Jim, and look at me like old times." And she looked up pleadingly at him. Jim hesitated a moment.

"I don't know as I can rightly say as I forgives you now," he said, slowly, "for you've just made me despise myself; and after to-night I don't seem as how I could look a man in the face."

Meg turned sadly away, and silently got ready for the night. She had not got the earthly forgiveness she sought, but that night there was "joy in heaven over one sinner that repented."



#### CHAPTER VI.

## "SUNSHINE FOR HATTIE."

bring Hattie in as often as he could get her to come to share the pleasant times in his home. And, truly, it was as sunshine to the girl, bringing her warmth and gladness. She opened out, and, as it were, sunned herself in the love all around her; and it was not long before she began to feel almost as much at home amongst them as if she were indeed one of the family. Although in the day her time was fully occupied, in the long winter evenings she was able to get out, and her mother let her go, without thought or care where she

spent her time. She gave as well as received from that little circle; for when it was taken for granted by all that there was something lovable in her, it was wonderful how quickly she responded to it, and how soon she made herself almost necessary to each one. there was especially to whom Hattie brought much. John Archer, the eldest of the family, who was one of the porters at their village station, found her growing very dear to him; and when he came home in the evening for an hour or two, it was a feeling deeper than he had known before that crept up in his heart, as he saw her girlish figure moving about helping his mother, and caught sight of two glistening eyes which looked to him as if they brightened the more for his coming. True, she did not take any particular notice of him when he came in, and, oftener than not, would turn her head a little away when he came nearer to the fire, but not before he had had

time to see the bright flush on her face, and the shy look which made him care more still to look again. He was a plain, blunt fellow, with no personal appearance to recommend him, excepting a strong, well-built figure, and a general look of kindliness in his face, and a something which made you feel instinctively, "Here is one to trust." And Hattie, as she grew to know him, could not help admiring his protecting way with his mother, and with her, and, as she felt sure, with any woman with whom he came in contact. He had said nothing to her yet that he might not have said to any one else; but the same feeling was deepening in each of their hearts, and each was rejoicing in it. It put fresh energy into John's work, and his voice, as he called out hour after hour the name of the station as the trains came in, got to have an unusually joyous ring in it, as each one seemed to bring him nearer to the hour when he should go

home, and might, perhaps, find somebody waiting for him.

And Hattie. It gladdened the girl's whole heart to know, as she could not help knowing, that the love of one like John was given to her, hitherto so unused to love. What did it matter if things were ever so troublesome at home all day, when she had the happy evenings to look forward to? And lately she had tried, helped on by Mrs. Archer's example and words, to make home a little more comfortable. It seemed very uphill work, for all her attempts met with sneers and laughter from her mother; but she did try, nevertheless, and felt the happier herself for it, although it did not appear to have any good results. The mother, given to that girl to be a guide and a blessing, was the greatest hindrance she had, and she was driven to seek in another mother's heart for the love she stood in need of. Sad, indeed, that of any mother it can

be said, that a child of hers went away from her empty. Had you spoken to Mrs. Green herself, she would have said, "What did Hattie want that she didn't get? She got her food and clothes, and what more'd she want, she should like to know?" She knew nothing of the mother's tender love that makes her child instinctively go to her with all her joys, and nestle closely to her when any of the troubles of life come upon her. A glance at Mrs. Green would have been sufficient to show you that a joy would be tarnished and a sorrow embittered by being told to her ears.

And this was a woman who was found Sunday after Sunday in her place at church, to all appearance attentive, and joining with loud voice in the responses that went up from the congregation; confessing herself to be a "miserable sinner," and to "have erred and gone astray like a lost sheep." Yet, had you

gone to her, and told her face to face that she was utterly vile in God's sight, that in her was nothing good, she would have met you indignantly with the assertion that she was better than her neighbours, and that she stood in need of nothing. In need of nothing! When she was standing on the very brink of a precipice. In need of nothing! When her whole heart was full of nothing but self; when her house was thrown open to Satan, who ruled there as master; when there was no room for her Saviour in home or heart. Sad, indeed, for a woman, in such a plight and so utterly needy, to say, "I am full."

It was not, therefore, to be wondered at that Hattie kept to herself the new happiness that had come to her, not daring to bring it to the light of her mother's eyes, lest it should lose some of its brightness. And that mother's eye, quick to find out faults and defects in others, was not quick in love, and

failed to notice the change in her girl which others not so close to her marked; and did not know that the springing, joyous step about the house, and the snatches of merry song, were tokens of the glorifying influence of love: love of Christ, and love of man.

Hattie had not much yet of which she could speak to others about her earthly love; for it was an unacknowledged love, and no outward word had been uttered about it. But there it was for all that, and the girl felt it, and rejoiced in it. It was none the less sweet to her that it was not known to others, and she kept it wrapped up sacredly in the depths of her heart; kept it from all but God, to whom she had learnt to bring her joys, as well as her sins and sorrows, and lay them at His feet.

### CHAPTER VII.

## "A CLOUD."

"Jesus bids us shine
With a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle
Burning in the night.

"In the world there's darkness,
So we must shine;
You in your small corner,
And I in mine."

O sang Mrs. Archer, as she busily swept out her little parlour. She always said she worked the faster for her singing, and we should have said so, too, had we been able to watch her. Nothing escaped that quick, bright glance; and when she at last laid by

her broom, and looked round once more, it was to see no corners full of dust and rubbish, but each neatly swept out, and the whole carpet, though faded and old, as neat and clean as you would wish to see it. She opened the window, and leaving the dust to settle, was on her way to see after the dinner, when she caught sight of Hattie leaning against the door with a parcel on her arm, looking out idly and listlessly into the little bit of garden. She was surprised to see the girl at that time, as she knew she was apprenticed to a dressmaker in the village, and was generally there all day.

"Why, Hattie, what brings you here?" she asked, in her cheery voice.

Hattie turned slowly round.

"I'm off on an errand for Miss Tyke, to take this dress to a lady; leastways, that's what I should be doing," she said, with a short laugh.

- "Run away, then, dear," said Mrs. Archer, kindly: "I guess you're getting no good idling about your work, are you?"
- "Well," went on Hattie, sadly, "I was passing your door, and when I heard you singing, I stopt a bit just to listen, and then,—well. I was just thinking." But her voice had such a sad tone that it went to the mother's heart.
- "It won't do to talk it over now, dear," she said, "for it isn't my time, and it isn't yours, just now; but you've got some trouble, Hattie. Take it straight to Jesus, He'll take it off you, child."
- "No, I won't stop, Mrs. Archer; for you couldn't help me, and I'm almost of a mind there isn't any one as could. But sure enough one bit of that verse you was singing is true enough,—'In the world there's darkness:' darkness enough for me, anyhow." And she took up her parcel, and went

quickly away to hide the tears that would come, Mrs. Archer knew well.

She set to work to dust the little room, but with a sadder heart than she had swept it. She knew it was home-troubles with Hattie; but the girl had been so bright and happy lately, that she could not understand the change now, and felt sure that something worse than usual must have happened.

She would have grieved more still if she had known how full Hattie's heart felt that morning, and that she had had a sudden check in her upward walk, and a sudden clouding over the sunshine that had looked so bright but yesterday. Mrs. Archer had expected a very different face to greet her the next time Hattie found her way to their cottage; for only the night before, when John came home from his work, he had gone straight up to his mother, and with such a proud, happy look in his eyes, had said,—

"Well, mother, I'm to have a little wife one of these days,—when I've got enough to keep her with,—and I guess I needn't tell you her name's Hattie Green."

And the mother had answered him with just such another look; and, with joyful tears in her eyes, had said,—

"God bless you, John, and her too."

But if it was so, and Hattie had given him her promise, how was it that the girl had looked that morning as if a great sorrow, instead of a great blessing, had been sent her? Mrs. Archer thought that John had, perhaps, been a little too quick, and had not understood her rightly. She thought over it until she grew weary of thinking, and at last left off, determining to wait until she could learn more from either one or the other.

And, meanwhile, Hattie went on her way slowly, and with all the energy taken out of her step, usually so light and active. Last night, on her way home from the dressmaker, John Archer had met her, and, going up to her, had said,—

"Hattie, I met you to-night because I wanted just to tell you out a bit of what's on my mind. I don't believe as how I need to tell you much," he went on, looking down into the bright, flushing face, "for I don't see as you could help knowing it long afore this. But it's just this, Hattie, I've nothing as yet to offer you much,—nothing but my porter's pay, which isn't much to speak on, and I guess we should do best to wait a bit; but some day, Hattie, I've got in my mind a little bit of a home, with you in it to make it home; and if you could make up with me,—a plain, blunt fellow like me,—I'd just be right down proud, I would; and I don't believe, Hattie, there's another who'd love you like me."

It was a long speech for John, who was not much given to talking at any time, but it came straight from his heart; and Hattie, looking shyly up in his face, felt it was all true, and said, softly,—

"And, John, I love you, too."

They walked back very silently after this, but no more words were needed, and hearts often get all the closer in silence. Passers by, who might have marked the faces of the two walking side by side, with all the joy of acknowledged love glistening on each face, would not have found it difficult to see that the old, old story had been told again once more, and that it had found its way to the heart of her to whom it was told. John left Hattie at her own door, and went on to tell his happiness to his mother. And Hattie, hastening in quickly and gladly, went up first to her little room, and there on her knees poured out her thankfulness. A few months before, and she would not have been found there; but, lately, anything that happened in

her daily life had been first poured out to Christ, whether it was joy, or whether it was sorrow.

And now, when she rose from her knees and went downstairs, it was with the determination to tell her mother what had happened. Although she did not anticipate much sympathy from her, still she felt she couldn't keep it in now: she would like the world to know, and her heart was so full that she must let out some of its joy.

Mrs. Green had been looking out of the window that evening, and had seen John and Hattie walking together, and had made her own comments.

"Oh," she said, unpleasantly, when Hattie came in, "so that's what you're after, is it? Dawdling home in that there fashion with young men, instead of hurrying up to help your mother."

Hattie's cheeks were crimson, but the glad

light in her eyes had quickly changed into anger, and she answered hastily,—

"It's the first time I haven't walked home by myself, and as to dawdling with young men, you know very well, mother, that's what you've no call to say, for I've never done it in my life, and you might have known it."

"Oh, you needn't try to get out of it now! Didn't I see you outside there along with that young fool of an Archer? It isn't a mite of good you taking along of him, I can tell you."

"Yes: I was outside with John Archer, and I'm no ways ashamed of it neither." And poor Hattie's voice and face grew harder as she spoke. "But there was no such thing as dawdling about it: we walked just straight home, and John Archer, who you, mother, shouldn't dare to call a fool, asked me to be his wife, and I've said I will."

Mrs. Green broke out into a loud, coarse laugh.

"Asked you to be his wife, did he? And you've said you will, eh? And, pray, what's he got to give you? and how's he a going to keep a wife? That's fine, that is: a pretty young couple you'd be. He can sing you a psalm or two, I warrant you, and a fine noise he makes about it in church a shouting out in that there fashion; but, bless you, child, psalms won't keep you in clothes and victuals, and it's precious little he's got besides, I'll venture."

"Yes: and there you're right," retorted Hattie, hotly: "it is precious little he's got; and he don't ask me to marry him yet awhile. We're going to wait, him and me, till we can get a start. He's not the one to take a wife and let her want."

"Wait, are you?" sneered Mrs. Green. "I'd like to see you. Likely enough your father and me's a going to have you waiting about. You'll have to get off our hands, and

that pretty soon, I can tell you. Why, if you'd had a mite of spirit in you, you'd have got married and out for yourself long afore this. You aint to think any more of marrying that young canting fool, who hasn't a penny to bless himself with, for your father and me, we won't hear of it, so there's for you."

"John Archer's no fool, mother: he's a Christian, if that's what you mean."

"A Christian, is he? and you're another, I suppose. And that's the way Christians go on, is it? A setting theirselves up above their own mothers, and answering and retorting in that there fashion,—oh, they're a fine lot, they are!"

"No," said Hattie, slowly: "I don't think I'm much of a Christian." And she walked out of the room with a hard set expression on her face. She did not seek her own room this time to get the comfort she so sorely needed, neither did she lift up one cry to

Her thoughts of God just then were bitter, angry ones. Why had He let her have such a taste of joy, only to take it away from her, and leave her emptier than ever before? For she knew now that all must be at an end between her and John. They could not marry at once, for they would have barely enough for the commonest necessaries of life. if even that; and yet, after what her mother had said, how was she to live on there and wait till he had enough to make a home for her? She didn't know what to do. But she felt that, come what might, she would not tell John about it, for she knew he would want her to marry him at once, and then she would be nothing but just a burden to him. So she resolved to bear the trouble alone, and try by degrees to quench her love for him. course I can," she said to herself, hardly: "anything can be done, and I'll do it. But he does love me." And here the poor girl broke down and cried long and bitterly. She felt so alone and so desolate,—a feeling she had not had for such a long time; and, worse than all, she felt without Christ. She said to herself that she would try to forget all about that, too, and lead a different life altogether. No help came to her from that now, she said, and she'd get on better at home if she dropped all pretence of being a Christian.

Poor Hattie! She forgot that she had not sought the help, and forgot all the help she had so often got before when in trouble; and now she turned away from the loving Saviour, who was even now bending over His child in love and pity.

So it was that the next morning found Hattie walking sullenly and slowly to her work; and when, in the course of the morning, she was sent on an errand, and had to pass Mrs. Archer's door, and heard her voice within singing cheerily over her work, she lingered a few minutes wistfully outside, wondering at the words and the utter contrast in them to her own heart, and calling to mind the talk she had had that Sunday evening with Dick about "shining." Since that talk, it had seemed a possibility for even Hattie in her wretched home to "shine." But now all that was over, and it would be all darkness for her again and sin. Her heart stood still, as she walked away after the few words with Mrs. Archer, as she thought of all the happy hours she had spent in that little cottage, and how she would have no more of them; and to herself she said, "Good-bye to John, good-bye to all good and happiness."



## CHAPTER VIII.

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# "A WOMAN'S STORY, AND THE HELP IT BROUGHT."

T was evening time in the village: that time when, of all others, home seems most like home; and when absent ones (who are away) turn their thoughts instinctively to it with renewed longings. It was time for the labourers to shoulder their tools, ready for the homeward walk; and time for the wives and mothers to get the hearths swept up, the fires stirred to look their brightest, and the evening meal spread ready to welcome home the tired bread-winners.

A peep into the different cottages would

give us a foresight of what the "coming home" would be. Some were all in confusion and hurry; untidy mothers and dirty children scrambling about and making things worse in their haste. Dull fires, dusty tables and chairs, rubbish lying about in all directions, and poor, if any, preparation for the meal which would be sorely needed by the weary In other homes you would home-comers. see a pleasant, bright look of expectancy about the little room and its occupants. The mother, perhaps, after making all ready, would go to the door, and, with the little ones clean and tidy clinging about her, would stand at the open door watching for the step she knew so well, and was always ready to welcome.

Happy the husband who is always sure of a welcome; and wretched, indeed, he who can look forward to nothing but dark, lowering looks, and "continual dropping."

Amongst those who had got all ready for him who was toiling to win her and her little one bread, was Meg Morrison. Had you taken a look into that cottage, you would have seen nothing which was not done; everything looked inviting, and, though poor, was made the best of. For since the sad night when Meg had been first awakened from her sloth, she had striven her very best to make her home more what it was meant to be. But still there seemed a want. It is true that Jim was very rarely to be found at the public-house, and generally came straight home; but their evenings were very silent ones, and each went to rest with a disheartened kind of feeling. Jim seemed to get more and more irritable, and felt put out with Meg for always looking so sorrowful and spiritless. When they were first married, her laugh would often ring through the house, and gladden him up after his hard day's work.

But now, such a thing as a smile even was rarely to be seen in the Morrison's little cottage, much less the sound of a laugh heard. And who does not know the good that a real joyous laugh does to tired frames and weary minds? Truly "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine," and as truly, "by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." And Jim did not see very deeply, and did not know that Meg's constant sorrowfulness was caused by the knowledge of all her failures. And even had he known it, he would not, I think, have felt less impatience; for if there is one thing more than another that a man cannot understand it is this tendency that often besets women to brood over sins and failures morbidly, and to allow sorrow for them to swallow up everything else. Meg did not see that she was doing wrong in thus giving way to her sorrow; she thought it was the only way in which she could show her repentance.

And, therefore, although the home itself looked as bright and comfortable as any home in the village, the hearts inside were dark and gloomy. The little one, now able to trot about, had a grave, old air for so young a child, and looked as if she was missing the playful, loving nonsense that sometimes passes between the mother and the children. Few kisses did she get that were not mixed with tears; and though all love and care were shown, it was sad, grave love, and faint and few were the mother's smiles to gladden that little heart.

On the evening of which we write, both mother and child were sitting outside the door on the step, in that soft light that lingers over all things before darkness sets in: the mother with her now usual sad, desponding face; and the child nursing a doll in a grave, motherly way. They neither of them noticed a woman standing a few steps off watching them



"Mother and child were sitting outside the door on the step."—Page 72.



intently, and it was not until she at last drew nearer and stood close to them that they caught sight of her.

Meg was struck by the wild kind of look in her eyes, and, standing up, asked if she could do anything for her.

"Anything for me!" repeated the woman, bitterly. "No:  $\Gamma m$  past doing for now, but you aint, and I guess you want something badly."

Meg looked surprised, and answered, quickly, "I don't want anything, thank you. I don't understand just what you mean. I thought you was ill: you looked so strangely."

And she was turning to go into the house, when the woman caught hold of her dress.

"Look here," she said, eagerly; "I don't mean no harm: don't you go and be angered like. You aren't happy now, are you?"

"It's no business of yours, as I can see, if

I'm happy or not," answered Meg, hastily; "but as far as that goes, there's a good many in this world that isn't happy, and that don't deserve to be."

"No: don't deserve to be," the other repeated, slowly and sadly; "don't deserve to be. But still," she went on eagerly again, "you've got a husband, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Meg, reluctantly. She did not like nor understand her strange companion, but she could not turn away from her, and felt obliged to answer.

"And a little child: a little child," went on the woman, with a softening in her voice and a tenderness creeping into her face as she looked at Meg's little one, sitting there so strangely quiet and unchildlike.

"Yes," answered Meg, pointing to the child: "you can see her; here she is by me."

"And your husband," continued her

questioner, looking earnestly at her. "Tell me,—now don't you be angered with me,—you love him, and he loves you?"

- "Of course, of course," Meg said, hurriedly. "Why do you ask me such things?"
- "And he's good to you, is he? Tell me, is he a good husband?"
- "Yes: he is good to me," was the answer, with a sigh.

"Then listen to me; for God's sake listen." The woman drew nearer still, and Meg was almost startled at the depth of earnestness in her face and voice. "Once I, too, had a husband, and I, too, had a little one like you; but now I'm all alone and desolate. None can be more alone than me. And shall I tell you why I'm alone and wretched? why on all the earth there's none more sad than me? It was just such another look as that I saw on your face, as I was standing looking at you, that drove my husband away from me. Yes:

I tell you that was it. I'd been well-nigh driv' out of my senses,—night after night he'd come home drunk, and, instead of money, would fling hard words at me; and night after night I'd cry myself to sleep, hugging my baby, oh, so tight! with never so much as a drop to give her. At last, one day he came home a bit earlier than usual, sober, and he give me a bit of money, the first I'd had for many a day, and I says to myself, 'Times will be better now.' But all of a sudden like. he turned round and says, 'That's the last you'll have of me or mine;' and while I looked at him, not guessing what 'twas he meant, he goes on: 'It isn't much you've had of my money of late, so you'll not miss it, and, maybe, you'll earn a bit for yourself as many another does. I tell you what,' he says: 'if you'd been a bit more cheerful and kind like to me when I first took to drink, I don't believe as how I'd ever have gone and took to

it reg'lar as I do now; and who knows but what I might have giv' it up altogether? But from the very first night you turned as gloomy and your face was always as long and hard as could be, and it driv' me on like. I didn't want looks o' that kind: I wanted something a bit cheerier than that, and so I goes where I could find it, and you can always get a cheery word and a pleasant look over yonder; and so I just took to it, and I've kept to it, as you knows. It's just the only thing I've got to make me forget you and your sad face. For, lass,' and here he changed his voice a bit, and seemed to get a bit kinder, 'I loved you once, but you was mighty different then. I've been a brute, and when I'm sober I sees it; but I've no more power over myself than that there baby, and it aint a mite o' good me stopping along o' you: 'twill be best for both on us to manage for ourselves.' Oh, how I begged him! how I just beseeched him! yes,

even on my knees, to give me if only one chance for baby's sake, if not for mine; but, no, all he kept saying was, 'You'll do best without me, lass.' And then he went off, and left me. And I,—I was just mad at first, like a wild creature: had no thought for anything, not even for the baby, who I knew was just a wasting away for want of something. But where could I go, and what could I do? At last I went and bought a drop o' milk with the money he'd give me; but nothing could save the baby now. She died, and I couldn't cry not even one tear for her. I was glad; for she's better off, poor lamb. God knows if I'd but the chance give me of a starting again afresh in my life, He knows I'd be different, oh, so different! forgive me now, won't you?" she said, earnestly, "for telling you. But when I saw that face of yours, it put me in mind of it so again, and I couldn't keep myself back.

You've got the chance. Yes: God is good to you,—you've got the chance; take warning by me."

Meg could not speak: the tears were raining down her cheeks. She could only hold out her hand, and press that of the speaker silently in her own.

"I'm going now," said the woman, in a few moments; "but tell me first you're not angered with me?" and she looked wistfully into Meg's face.

"You've done me good," whispered Meg, tearfully. "God bless you," and, stooping down, she left a kiss on her forehead; then, putting her hand in her pocket, she said, "I've got a little: may I help you?"

The woman drew back at once, with an indignant flush on her face.

"I don't need your money," she said. "I earn enough to keep myself alive, and there's only myself to keep: you've paid me well."

And drawing her shawl closely over her head, she walked quickly away.

Meg looked after her as well as she could for her tears, and then, taking her child with her, she went into their little room, and, kneeling down, sobbed out her repentance. She saw the mistake she had been making; saw it as never before; and she implored the help of Christ, that He would give her, so weak and helpless, of His strength in her fresh struggle. And surely her cry was heard, for never is that Ear deaf to His children's wants, never is that Arm powerless to help, and never is that Heart cold and careless to the slightest need of those that call upon Him.

Jim Morrison, walking wearily home that evening, was not full of any very bright anticipations as to the welcome he would receive. Certainly the thought of a nicelycooked supper and a few hours of rest to his tired limbs were good to look forward to. But that was all. Although he was a good husband at heart, and loved his wife and child, it was, as it were, with a past love, not a growing one; and he could not truthfully have said that the crowning reward of the end of his day's toil was the feeling that he was on his way to be again with those for whom he had toiled. And we cannot wonder that so it was. The mutual strength and comfort each needed from the other had been wanting; and instead of each lightening the other's burdens, they had served to make them heavier.

Amongst his fellow-workmen, Jim could forget for a time the soreness that lay in his heart, and would join in the jokes and laughs of those around him, and was known as a "right-down good fellow." And Meg would have been surprised could she have seen him one of the most jovial and cheery of the workers, and it would most likely have made

her trouble press still heavier on her, for the knowledge of what he was to others, but not to her. But there was no chance of her seeing him at those times, and the cheeriness had all vanished from his face by the time he set his foot on the threshold of their home. Home! what a sacred word! What a sound full of blessing it has in it for some on God's earth: and what a sound of loneliness and wretchedness it brings to others! Home is, and must ever be, such as we make it for ourselves; truly, not in the exterior, but in the inner recesses, which only the inmates of that home know the depths of. It may be rich, or it may be poor; but it rests with ourselves, whether it is such a home that can bear the light of God's Eye, which looks down on all the dwellings of the children of men, or whether the thought of that Eye would make the dwellers therein tremble, and shrink into their very selves.

It was sad to watch the change come over the young husband's face, as he slowly undid the latch of the little gate,—to see the features settle down into their usual set expression for his home, and to mark the knitted brow and slow step. I say, "for his home," for in other homes he was a very different man. Many women in those other homes would have said that Meg Morrison ought to be a very happy wife; for Jim was ever ready with his smiles and jokes, and always had a pleasant word for them, when they happened to meet. They did not know that the cheery looks gladdened them, and the pleasant little compliments which brightened their cheeks, were all unknown to his own wife, whose eye had lost its brightness, and whose face was pale and careworn for want of these, which were her real right and possession. This right had, to a great extent, been forfeited; and Jim had reason in the many excuses he made to

himself, when his conscience pricked him, for his gloomy, taciturn ways with her whom he had promised to "love and cherish," and in his own heart had resolved to keep as happy and bright as he had found her. But there was much for Jim to repent of as well as Meg; and it would have been sadder still to watch the sullen change over face and manner come over him that evening, if we had not ourselves undone the latch before him, and, therefore, known that his coming home that day would bring with it something different to the many dreary days which preceded it. We will not follow Jim in; for the tearful, shining face of Meg, as she hastened to meet him, and the broken words of repentance and love, show that the meeting between husband and wife that night is too sacred for other eyes and Happy Jim! and happy Meg! for the "Sun of righteousness has arisen upon you with healing in His wings."

#### CHAPTER IX.

# "EVIL WROUGHT BY A MOTHER."

RS. ARCHER watched anxiously for John's coming home the evening of the day she had seen Hattie. She longed to know all was right for the happiness of the two she loved so well; and she could not help having many misgivings after Hattie's face and tone that morning. A glance at her son's face, as soon as he came in, was quite sufficient to show her that at least he had no misgivings. Both face and voice were very cheery, and his greeting to her had a heartier ring in it even than usual.

It did not exactly lessen her anxiety to see this, as she still had a fear that he had been too quick, and had not understood Hattie, and she dreaded the discovery when he should make it.

He had looked quickly round the room, on first coming in, as if expecting to see someone besides his own family there; but had not expressed any surprise, or seemed disappointed.

"She's a bit shy," he said to himself. "I guess she don't like to come among them just at first: I'll go round after supper, and bring her myself."

And, accordingly, after the meal was finished, he took down his hat again, and walked in the direction of Hattie's home.

He was close by the door when he caught sight of her coming to meet him, and he quickened his steps joyfully.

It was getting dark, but not too dark for him to make out that the figure was Hattie's, although the voice startled him by its unlikeness to that which he had generally heard coming from her.

"Is it you?" she asked, coming nearer. "I thought as likely as not you'd come; so I came out to teil you that I've thought better of it, and I'll take back my word I gave you last night, that's all." And with that she was moving away, when John, who for the first moment was so taken by surprise as to be quite unable to speak, hastened after her.

"Stay, Hattie," he said, quietly, but firmly: "that's not all. Last night you gave me your word, as pure and true as could be spoke, that you loved me; and now it is but right and fair that I should know what calls you to take it back again."

"I've told you," she answered in the same tone, but with a forced attempt at a laugh: "I've been and thought better of it, and I suppose that's what any girl may do."

"I suppose," said John, looking straight at

her, "any girl might do it, Hattie; but I thought as how you wasn't quite of that sort, somehow. I know," he went on, "I'm a poor fellow, Hattie, and I don't deserve you should like me; but you did last night, and I can't see as I've done anything atwixt that and now to change you."

Hattie hesitated for a minute, and her face changed a little, but only for a minute; the next she said,

"Well, I've told you what I came out for, and that's all I'm going to tell you; and no one can't force me any more,—so, good-bye, John: we'll shake hands and forget all about it."

But John did not hold out his hand to take hers.

"Good-bye," he said, gravely and sadly. "I won't take your hand, Hattie; it don't seem natural to shake hands like that, when I'd thought I'd have had a right on your hand

that no one else could have had. And I won't forget it, either, and couldn't, if I wished it ever so; but I'll say, God bless you, Hattie, and that's the best thing I could say; and if ever there's a thing a strong fellow like me, who isn't good for much else, could do for you, you'll let me know."

He left off rather abruptly and walked away, leaving her standing looking after him. Then the girl's face changed, and the tears forced themselves, one after the other, down her cheeks,—hot, burning tears, which she had been keeping back with all the strength of her will while they talked. At last she moved, and turned towards home.

"It's done now," she said, sorrowfully: "he'll never know the reason. He'll think me everything bad as can be, and I can't say anything to help it. Oh, it's a weary, weary world!"

Poor girl! she was young to feel that:

young to feel so utterly hopeless and alone. At her age many girls, safely sheltered in their happy homes, with love and care on every side to shield them from evil and sorrow, would have uttered very different words about this same world of ours. Little do some know of the troubles and sins which fall upon even girls as young as Hattie, when they have to brave a hard world alone, and when they have no one at hand to guard them against the countless dangers which beset them. there was at hand to help Hattie; but against Him she was striving to harden her heart, and she did indeed feel dreary. She asked herself bitterly why it was that God had sent her this trouble, just, too, when she had been trying to serve and please Him more than ever Why was her lot so different to that before. of other girls, who seemed to have nothing but brightness and love always around them? As these thoughts passed through her mind,

a carriage passed close by her, and by the light of the lamp she caught sight of a fair, girlish face inside, whose owner was comfortably leaning back on the cushioned seat, listening to the eager talk of a young man, who sat opposite. By her side was a lady, who, Hattie thought, must be her mother; and although the carriage passed by quickly, it was not before she had had time to catch the proud, fond look in the mother's eyes, as she watched her young daughter by her side. They were evidently on their way to some evening entertainment, as dress and hour betokened; and as they went swiftly past, it seemed to poor Hattie as if it had been another little drop of bitterness added to her cup.

Why should all be fair and joyous to that girl, and all dark and gloomy to her? She had everything,—riches, beauty, love; and Hattie had nothing. It really looked to her,

at that moment, as if nothing but poverty and hard words did belong to her.

And she, with her own hand, had just thrown from her the love that might have been hers.

Possibly that young face inside the carriage window, if known better, would have revealed other tales but that of brightness and joy. Could Hattie have watched it a few hours later, and have seen the mask thrown off, which was shown to the outer world,—have marked the tired, dissatisfied look creeping over the features so lately alive with playfulness and smiles,—she would not have entered her home with those envious, hungry feelings in her heart.

For even into the richest homes trouble and sorrow finds their way just as into the poorest. No carpets are so soft and rich, no curtains so silken and costly, but care and grief can creep through them to the hearts of the owners as easily as through the bare boards and curtainless windows of the meanest home. Nay, sin itself gets high as well as low. The devil has many rich servants as well as poor. And out of those wide, stately halls of the dwellings of the great, dead ones will be carried one day, either to everlasting life or to unspeakable woe, whom no riches could keep, for whom no wealth could purchase life. It is only in those homes, whether rich or poor, where Christ reigns as Master that death enters, but has no power to kill; where, underneath and surrounding the outside life, is the life Divine and abiding, which no death can destroy, and no trouble sully.



### CHAPTER X.

"A VISIT TO AN UNNEIGHBOURLY NEIGHBOUR."

HE summer months had passed over the little village since last we glanced at it; and now the cold, dark winter days have set The outside world looked bare and desolate with its leafless boughs and dull, grey skies. But summer was still reigning in some of the village homes, and no winter cold could chase away heart-warmth and gladness. To Jim and Meg Morrison it seemed as if their brightness increased each day; and although the purse had not got much heavier, still there were braver, lighter hearts to meet and battle with the daily struggle; and more than all, they sought for

help and strength together, each night and morning, from Him who alone could give it. I do believe that the real secret of a happy home lies in this seeking God together. Is not the promise given, that where "two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"? And surely more especially in the midst of those two who have undertaken to go through life together, and share each other's joys and sorrows. bond between husband and wife is one so inexpressibly solemn, and one which involves so much of true, earnest love one to the other, that, unless constant help from Him who made the bond is sought, it must fail to be carried out as He would have it. There is no man and wife living who would not be bound together more closely, and who would not be stronger and better able to "bear each other's burdens," if together they knelt before the God who made them one, and sought for guidance and blessing on their home. The excuse so often offered, that it is so difficult to speak of such things to those nearest to us, and whom we love best, is not one, we may be sure, which will stand before Him; for how can we truly love Him, if we make no mention of Him to each other? The reserve, if there, is very difficult to overcome, but by God's grace it can be; and then, and not till then, will the full sweetness of married life be tasted.

John Archer, through those summer days, had often found it hard to bear up above the sorrow which had so unexpectedly come upon him. He had not fully understood before how closely Hattie was bound up in his life; and how the thought of living their lives together had buoyed him up in his daily duties. But still, bear up he did, and bravely, too; and few would have guessed the wound that lay deep in his heart.

Day after day found him in his accustomed place at the station; and although his manner was graver, and his voice a shade less cheery, no one, either there or in his home, had to complain of any failure in duty.

He had never seen Hattie to speak to since the night they parted. Once or twice, coming from his work, he had met her in company with other girls who worked with her; but she never noticed him, and he heard her voice talking all the louder and faster, as if to show she cared nothing for him.

At these times, poor John would go home with a very sorrowful heart, for he could see she had got amongst a set of girls who could do her no good,—a giddy, reckless set, who might lead her into much evil. And he fancied from the tone of her voice as he passed, and by the glimpse he caught of her dress, that she was following in their way, and changing from the simple, quiet girl he

had loved. How he longed to help her, and shield her from any evil! But he was so far removed from her now that the wish seemed more than vain.

Once he had begged his mother to see what she could do; and to satisfy him, Mrs. Archer went to the house of her neighbour, Mrs. Green, although it was a very repulsive task to her. The reception she met with was certainly not overwhelming in its pleasantness; but she had not expected anything more than she got.

Hattie was not at home, and she had to wait some time before she could make any one hear. At last, after knocking two or three times, she ventured to lift the latch, and see it she could hear any one within. She had no sooner done so than Mrs. Green came out from her back room with two or three dirty, untidy children after her; she, herself, with hair done up in curl papers, torn dress, and altogether slovenly appearance. It was difficult

to her visitor to believe that it was the same Mrs. Green who she would see coming into church next Sunday, with bonnet, dress, and shawl, such as few dwellers in those cottages could boast, and such as many of those humble dwellers looked at, I am sorry to say, with envy most of the time the service was going on. They forgot, as did Mrs. Green, if, indeed, she had ever cared to take any notice of it, the guide for women as to dress, which all have to direct them. "Not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." But not in Mrs. Green's sight. To her, a "meek and quiet spirit" were anything but an "ornament;" and it was one of her constant boasts that "she was not one of your poor, weak spirited

ones, like that there Mrs. Archer now, dressed so dowdy and quiet, with never a flower or feather to show herself in." Mrs. Green's ornaments were certainly not those belonging to the hidden class; and if sought for there, would, I fear, have been sadly wanting. Hers were only too visible in the long false earrings that she tossed so complacently each Sunday, walking into church, in the tawdry flowers and dress so unbecoming in any one; but especially so in one who came from a home where little ones were ragged and uncared for, and often clamouring for more bread than their mother had to give them.

Mrs. Archer's heart ached for Hattie, as she saw the inside of her home, and she felt full of pity for the girl of such a mother. But there was no time for many thoughts to pass through her mind; for no sooner did Mrs. Green catch sight of her standing by the open door than she exclaimed, "Thank you, Mrs. Archer!

Ill teach you to come into other people's houses a prying about, and looking after other people's business, instead of your own!"

Poor Mrs. Archer was so taken aback by this accusation that she stood for a moment without answering a word; then, recovering herself, she said, pleasantly,—

"Well, now that I come to think of it, I'm afraid it was a bit rude of me to open the door; but I knocked, and couldn't make you hear, Mrs. Green; so as I wanted to see you about something very particular, I thought you'd, maybe, not be offended if I opened the door, just to see if you was in."

"To see if I was in, indeed!" retorted her neighbour. "Likely enough I'd be out at this time of a morning. I can't afford time to go gadding about to other folk's houses in the morning time, whatever other people can."

"And I'm sure you're quite right there," replied Mrs. Archer, not to be put out of

humour. "Morning's always a busy time, and if it hadn't been something very particular that I've got on my mind to ask you about, I should have been busy about my house, too; but, you see, I made sure I'd find you at home if I come straight away now."

Mrs. Green had nothing to say to this; but without asking her visitor to come in, and sit down, she stood with her arms akimbo, waiting for what should come next.

"It's about Hattie," Mrs. Archer said, gently. "It's such a long time now since she came nigh us; and we're all of us real fond of her, and I thought I'd come and see what was wrong with her."

"Wrong with her? I don't see as anything's wrong with her. I take it, she aint noways bound to go along of places she's not got a mind to."

"No," Mrs. Archer said, hesitatingly; "but she used to be just as pleased to come as we was to have her. And she and my son John, that works at the station, you know, they'd made up their minds to marry when they'd got enough together; and then, all of a sudden like, she went and changed her mind, and it don't seem altogether right."

"Oh, if that's what you're come after, we'll make short work of it, Mrs. Archer. If Hattie's been and changed her mind, she has, that's all; and a good thing for her she has, and I, for one, aint a going to change her round again, so good day to you, Mrs. Archer; and next time I'll be much obliged if you'll wait civil at the door, until you're asked to walk in."

And with these ungracious words, Mrs. Archer had to beat her retreat.

Sorrowfully she told John the result of her trial. To make any further attempt was, she felt, utterly useless; and, indeed, from Mrs. Green's words, it would almost seem that it had been Hattie's own doing; and if so, it was certainly better left alone.

But the mother's heart ached as she saw the disappointed look on her son's face, and she said, softly,—

"Roll it off, John: your shoulders, though they are so bonny and strong, aren't just strong enough for this, I take it. He'll carry it for you, dear lad; and worse things than this have righted themselves, somehow or other."

And John,—big, hardy John, who would shoulder a heavy box, and think nothing of it,—felt truly that there were burdens too heavy for even him; and he must fain lean on the strong arm of Him on whom we read we may "cast every care, for He careth for us." Poor John! heart-burdens are heavier and weightier far than hand ones; but even they can be lightened by Him who is able and willing to do more than we can ask or think.

## CHAPTER XI.

## "HATTIE BROUGHT BACK."

ND as for Hattie herself! No bright, buoyant feelings did that fair summer bring to her. Her heart was chill and bleak as the dreariest December. She sometimes thought to herself, bitterly, if she had but had some friend to tell her trouble to, how differently she might have acted! She could not see exactly what she would have done, and how she had gone wrong in respect to parting with John; but, at least, her conscience spoke loudly and often to her, that in forsaking her God, and wandering so far from Him wilfully, she had sinned very grievously. She knew this, and confessed it to herself, but she

made no effort to return. No: she tried to silence the voice that strove so hard to be heard, by saying, "It was too late now: she had gone too far, and now she must just go on; there was no help for her now."

Only once had she gone inside the village church since the night she parted with John; and then she had crept in to a dark corner, one Sunday evening, where she was unnoticed by all who knew her, save God.

She had watched John coming in with the rest of his family, and now and then during the service her eyes would look up stealthily, and try to catch a sight of him. There he sat,—the same straightforward, honest, manly look on his face; but Hattie thought he missed something of the happy, glad look he used to have, and she saw he looked older and graver, even in those few months. He had passed through trouble as she had; but the sorrow had purified him, like gold burned in

the fire; and instead of driving him away from his God, it had drawn him closer than ever before. He had tasted even through the darkness that the "Lord is good." Hattie read this in his face while she looked, and how she longed that it had been the case with her! But she had drifted very far out, like a little helpless boat, without master or guide, drifting slowly, but steadily out to sea, away from light and home. But the Master above was watching that little boat: His loving eye was upon her, and by and by He would stop that helpless drift, and place His hand on the helm, and draw her whither He would. And. first, notwithstanding His love, nay, even for very love. He would lead her into deep, dark waters, where it would seem the waves must well-nigh overwhelm her, but only to bring her out after into the quiet, calm haven where she would be.

After that Sunday night, Hattie never went

again. It seemed only to aggravate the trouble to sit there, and think of what might have been; and it brought back the days too vividly to her mind when she had sat by John's side, and when they had knelt down together in prayer to the God they both loved, and when their voices and hearts had alike joined in the hymns of praise. For in those happy old times she had always spent Sunday evening with the Archers, and generally it had turned out that the only vacant seat for Hattie in church was the one next to John. That seat was sometimes even now left empty, as if it belonged to someone, and others hesitated to fill it. But had Hattie gone to it now as of old, it would not have looked as if the right owner had come; for she was imitating the dress and appearance of the friends she had now chosen for herself. and would have looked strangely out of place in the midst of that quiet family. She felt

unlike herself in the new character she had taken up, and it was only the fear of ridicule and taunts that made her leave off the old simple ways.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare;" and what an easy snare it is to fall into! To act independently for yourself, up to what you know to be right, without any regard to the opinions of others, is by no means a light task. Let us not judge Hattie too harshly, but consider ourselves, "lest we also be tempted."

One thing she was mercifully kept from, and that was, from making any foolish, hasty marriage, which she would only live to repent; and although she was often on the very point of yielding to the persuasions and flatteries of one or other of the reckless set of young men with whom her companions were in the habit of associating, something always seemed to hold her back. She knew not what, but surely it was God's Hand stretched out to save

her from adding this fresh drop of unhappiness to her already unhappy life.

So the summer months had come and gone, but had left Hattie much as they had found her; and now the cold, dark winter days had set in,—days which even those who have plenty of clothes, plenty of food, and every other necessary, find it hard to bear without a grumble; but which add tenfold to the misery and want of God's poor, who have scanty supplies of comfort. But Jesus, our King, was poor. He was homeless, hungry, faint, and neglected. He is not far off, but most near to His needy ones; for He suffered with like sufferings, "and was in all points tempted like as we are."

One evening, Hattie, cold and weary, was walking home from her work. She was alone, which was very unusual with her; but she had stopped a little later than the others, to get an extra order completed before the morrow.

Alone, without her giddy companions, she was a different looking girl; for there was no strain to appear like them, and no false laughs and empty speeches had to be put on to try to seem one of them. Stripped of the mask she wore with such weariness, poor Hattie's was a very sad, pitiful face, and it would have made one's heart ache to come upon her. She walked slowly in spite of the bitter cold, for what was there at home to hurry for? Better even that cold night air, and those tired, aching limbs, than a fireside accompanied with taunts and sneers from her whose voice should have been the gentlest, and whose welcome should have been the most loving and tender.

What different girls there might be in this world of ours if, in their early battle with the world's cares and temptations, they could look forward each night to a mother's kiss; a mother's hand laid tenderly on the weary, aching brow; and a mother's earnest prayer to

God for forgiveness for the sins of the day, and for strength for the morrow!

But Hattie had no such welcome in store, and so her feet dragged heavily along the hard, frosty ground. She was watching vaguely a boy coming along in the opposite direction, whose quick, hurried step and eager way was a strange contrast to her own. She did not look at his face, and would have passed on listlessly, when suddenly he stopped just in front of her, so as to prevent her going on. And then she saw it was Dick Archer.

"Why, Hattie!" he exclaimed: "is it you yourself? Well, I'm right down glad. We've none of us seen nor heard of you for ever such a while."

There was no escape for her now, she was fairly caught; and the sight of Dick's well-known face, and the sound of his voice, so took her back to old times, that her eyes filled with unbidden tears,—tears, which fell

more softly than any she had lately shed, and she could not get her voice steady enough to answer him.

"We've been wondering ever so about you," went on the boy; "and there isn't one of us as haven't missed you. But we couldn't just make you out. You seemed to act so strange like. And mother, she told John one day as he mustn't fret, for she thought as how somehow you must have had enough of us. But I guess it wasn't that, Hattie?"

And he looked wistfully up in her face.

Hattie shook her head; she could not speak, for the tears were raining fast down her cheeks. The friendly voice of the boy had quite unnerved her, and she could only stand there, quietly sobbing. He went on after a moment or two,—

"But when John was took bad, and ever since, I thought you'd be sure to come then; for most all the neighbours about knows, and we made sure you would too. And I'll be bound it would have done him a sight of good to have had you about there, like you used to."

Hattie found her voice now.

"John took bad!" she repeated, breathlessly. "What do you mean, Dick? I've never heard one word about it."

"He's been right bad nigh upon six weeks now," said Dick, sadly. "He took cold at that there station, and it's just settled on him, and he can't shake it off, no how; and the doctor, he said yesterday, that he hadn't over much hope of his living now. He can't get a mite of strength, seems like, and he can't take his food proper, and he looks that bad. Oh, Hattie, he do look bad!"

"Not live!" said the girl, and her voice sounded wild and harsh. "Not live! Say you don't mean that, Dick; for God's sake, say it!"

"Ah, but I couldn't, Hattie," he answered,

shaking his head, sorrowfully; "for that's the truth. But come home with me a bit, and see him. I believe as how you'll feel better then. He don't mind it, not he. I guess he aint noways afraid, and I know it would please him ever so to see you again, Hattie; and to know, anyhow, as you haven't just forgotten us altogether like. He was rare fond of you; yes, that he was, and I believe he's just the same now."

"Come and see John," said Hattie, slowly and bitterly. "Oh, Dick, it wouldn't please him to see me now! I'm not as I was when he thought anything of me, and he'll turn again me now. But, oh, if he only wouldn't die!"

And she locked her hands fast together in her agony.

"Then you love him, too, just the same, Hattie?" asked the boy, eagerly, looking surprised. "He'd die happier for that, I

know. And as for turning again you, John's never turned his back on no living creature yet, as I knows of, and specially he wouldn't on you. Come along with me, and you'll see."

And he took her hand to draw her on with him.

"I'll walk home with you, and wait outside and hear just what he says; but I won't come in: oh, no, Dick!"

But she allowed herself to be led on and on, until she found herself outside the well-known door; and Dick went in, leaving her waiting in the cold, dark road.



## CHAPTER XII.

## "THE BRIGHT HOME."

HE moments seemed long to Hattie, waiting outside, and yet she almost dreaded the opening of the door again.

Something within told her she was sure of a welcome, and yet she had a feeling of shame at the very thought of seeing them all again. And then came a sharp pain at the remembrance that John was ill,—nay, dying! It was hard to bear, and the poor girl hid her face in her hands with a low cry of grief. It was so that Dick found her when he came out again, and he took her hands gently down, saying, "Come right in, Hattie: he's waiting for you."

She followed him without a word into the little room, where every corner seemed to remind her of old times. No: not every corner; for in the old arm-chair by the fire, with his feet on a low stool, lay John. But not the John of old times. Sickness had sharpened and altered his features very much; and Hattie, as she looked, could hardly believe it was him lying there so helpless and weak, with hardly strength to raise himself to greet her.

He smiled when she came in, and held out his hand, and she went and knelt down close by him, burying her face and trying to smother her sobs. Mrs. Archer had been in the room when she first came in with Dick, but Hattie had eyes for none save John; and so she had stolen quietly away, leaving the two alone together.

"Hattie," said John, quietly, "it's good of you to come in and let me see you again. I

promised you once, a while ago, that I'd always be ready to help you if you was in want of anything. But I'm not the strong fellow I was then. There isn't much left of me to help folks with; but I'm just of the same mind still, and you look somehow as if you needed a good bit of help."

Hattie could not speak yet, but she lifted up her face and watched him earnestly as he went on.

"I don't know how it all was, and what I did as you didn't like, Hattie; but I always knew as how it wasn't fair in me to ask you to be my wife,—me, such a plain, blunt fellow, and nothing for a girl to care for; but I loved you. Yes! God knows I loved you, and would have worked right hard to make a home for you."

He waited a minute or two, as a severe fit of coughing came on, and he sank back exhausted after it. By and by he went on,—

"You must tell me just how it all was, Hattie, and what's your trouble now; for I'm dying—dying fast, and I'd like to know before."

And Hattie did tell him: told him all, amidst her tears. And when he found that all the time she had loved him still the same, he stroked her hair gently as she knelt beside him, and said,—

"Then it's all right now. There'll be no home for us down here together; for here's a poor arm to make it with," and he smiled a little, holding out his thin, weak arm. "But I do believe, Hattie, as how God is preparing us a home up there, where I'm going."

"There'll be no home for me there," said Hattie, a shade of bitterness in her voice. "No, John, I'm not as I used to be. I've left off praying and reading my Bible; I've left off going to church; and God'll turn His back upon me now."

"Will He?" John spoke slowly, with a faint smile creeping over his face. very earnestly he went on,—"Look here, Hattie! When you come in just now, you didn't ook somehow as you used to, when you were often in and out of this room. There's something about you as isn't just like my Hattie: maybe it's your dress is a bit finer than your old ones as I know better; or, maybe, it's your hair, which you've been and cut, and made it cover up your dear little forehead that, I guess, is best left out open, as God put it in the first. Anyhow, you looked different altogether like; but right down underneath, I says to myself, there's the real little Hattie as I love; and I guess you didn't see me hold back like from you, did you, Hattie?"

"No: oh, no, John," the girl whispered, pushing back with both hands the hair which had disappointed those kind, loving eyes.

"But Dick told me, as we come along, you'd never turn your back on no one that wanted you."

"No more I would if I know myself; but still there just is no way of knowing ourselves, Hattie: we just go the other way sometimes to what we mean to. But if I loved you just as real and true when I saw you come through that door just now so unlike yourself, it seems to me just downright plain as how God has loved you all along, even though you've been ever so different, and forgotten Him, and gone all wrong and away from Him. He'll forgive you, I take it, Hattie, and be ever so much more glad to have you come to Him than I was to see you come to me. Don't it say, 'Though your sins be scarlet, they shall be white as snow'?"

They were silent for some time after this: then John covered his face with his hand, and in a few short sentences prayed for Hattie. Heart-words they were, and such as find their way at once to that listening One, who is ever waiting for His wandering sheep to come back to the safe shelter of the fold.

When he had finished, it was a tearful face that Hattie turned to him, but one in which shone the light of repentance, and the blessed knowledge of forgiveness. The hard look, lately so customary to her, had gone. With the assurance of God's love to her, her own to Him had come back again, and her heart went with each word her dying lover said. His strength was almost exhausted now, and he could only lean back in his chair watching her, as she still knelt on by his side. There they stayed till Mrs. Archer came in to see if anything was needed. She saw at a glance that there was peace on each face, and her only greeting to Hattie was a long, loving kiss.

Then she raised John's pillows, and gave him some nourishment.

It was getting late, and Hattie felt she ought to go home; so with an earnest "God bless you" from John, she left them, to come back again the next morning.

That next day was John's last on earth. Never once did Hattie leave his side; and every now and then he spoke to her strong, helpful words, even though his frame was so weak. And those words lived with the girl as the most precious things she had through life. Yes: truly God was leading her through dark waters, but she would live hereafter in the light; and what matter the earthly troubles, so only that our feet are planted firmly on the Rock? She could look forward now with John to their home above,—where no sin, sorrow, or parting can enter!

No doubt troubled the last moments of that dying one. He trusted simply in his Saviour, and his last words were, "Follow me, Hattie, to our bright home. Mother, help her."

And then his eyes closed, to open no more on earth, but in the midst of the joys prepared for him with Jesus his Master.



#### CHAPTER XIII.

## "MOTHERS and MOTHERS."

OHN'S death was the awakening of a new life with Hattie. Humbly and trustfully she walked in her daily life, fully believing in the forgiveness and love of her Saviour, and joyously looking forward to the life unending, where she would, for the first time, taste the joy and rest of home.

For Hattie, earth had no home. Her mother's house could not be called by that sweet, fair name. It needs something beyond the exterior to constitute a home, and that house had never possessed that something.

Much of Hattie's leisure time was spent at the Archers', where there was always a mother's welcome for her, and where, watching that mother's life, she learnt daily, pure, fresh lessons of womanly duties and joys.

Happy mothers, who act as loadstones to the daughters and girls who surround you, drawing them to high, pure, noble ways! And thrice wretched the mothers who drag those young lives deeper and deeper into the gulf of sin and misery that yawns around us. God help the mothers and wives into whose hands this little book may fall, and grant that of each it may be said,—

"Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

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